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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [IT](#) [GLOBAL](#) [DEFENSE](#)

SUBJECT: US-ITALIAN WORKING GROUP MEETS ON GLOBAL DEFENSE
POSTURE REVIEW

REF: ROME 3138

Classified By: DCM Emil Skodon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) SUMMARY. PM DAS Bue and OSD Strategy Director Pavel led a joint State-DOD delegation to Rome on December 7 to discuss anticipated US Global Defense Posture Review (GDPR) changes and work through details on reshaping our presence in Italy. In working group discussions with an Italian delegation led by Claudio Bisogniero, the MFA's Vice DG of the Multilateral Political Affairs Bureau, and Giovanni Brauzzi, head of the MFA NATO office, Bue and Pavel introduced additional details for NAS Sigonella under the GDPR, including force levels, training activities, and types of missions. The US side deferred discussion on freedom of action issues until an anticipated late-January meeting, when the USG will have completed its policy review on this topic. The Italians appreciated the additional details, noting some proposals for sensitive Special Forces training in Sicily might not be workable. Both sides agreed to reconvene the working group at the end of January or early February (with a technical working group of EUCOM and GOI MOD experts to meet in the interim) to address legal arrangements, certain technical questions (e.g., status of a planned NATO runway at Sigonella, chain of command for SOF operations out of Sigonella, and alternate proposals), specifics on possible training in Sicily, and what additional infrastructure would be needed to accommodate USG proposals. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) On December 7, DAS Bue and Director Pavel led a US delegation in the first GDPR working group consultations and provided presentations on the strategic plan for the GDPR, how SOF consolidation supports USG strategic rationale for posture changes, the long-term vision for Sigonella including general timing and proposed range of forces, and a general overview of special forces activities. Bisogniero emphasized the strong US-Italy Alliance, but reminded the US that linking activities at Sigonella to NATO remains important to meeting Italian constitutional requirements for US military operations based in Italy. Bue acknowledged the US places great importance on coordinating our moves with the GOI a.

4. (S) Pavel commented that consolidating SOF in Italy would provide both bilateral and NATO training opportunities and highlighted our interest in deepening our security relationship with Italy on all levels. Pavel pointed out that the strategic aim of defense realignment is to move away from a post-Cold War posture (e.g., heavy concentrations in Northern Europe), and adapt to future security challenges that the USG believes will come from Europe's southern and southeastern borders. Bisogniero also was interested in US realignment plans for Southeast Asia, which entail increasing contingency access for counter-terrorism (CT) operations. He noted that Italy and its European partners are increasingly focused on terrorist threats emanating from the region, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, and there has been an effort to strengthen regional CT capabilities. Bisogniero emphasized NATO's role in our plans, noting the need to strengthen transatlantic links. He also emphasized, as other Italian interlocutors have, that our plans for Vicenza and Naples were not problematic, and the primary issue to be

worked out is the proposal to consolidate European-based US SOF in Sicily.

LONG-TERM VISION FOR SIGONELLA & TIMING

5. (S) Bill Roeger, OSD/PA&E briefed on our long-term vision for Sigonella. He pointed out our current SOF posture in Europe is divided between several locations. To train and operate efficiently, however, those forces should be permanently stationed together. Presently, EUCOM-based SOF include Air Force units in the UK (RAF Mildenhall), ground components in Stuttgart, Germany, and two Navy SEAL units in Germany and Rota, Spain. Combining those forces in Italy would provide greater training opportunities (joint, bilateral, and NATO) and significant cost savings. It would also support training in other nearby regions, particularly in Africa.

6. (S) Roeger laid out a two-phased timeline for possible changes at Sigonella. Between 2008-2011, the US proposed:
-- Moving SOCEUR HQ from Germany to Sigonella;

-- Moving Army SOF from Germany to Sigonella;
-- Relocating SOF helicopters to Sigonella, and possibly rotating through SOF fixed-wing aircraft (i.e. MC-130s); --
Rotating AC-130 gunships through Sigonella; and
-- Moving maritime assets to, and improving the naval infrastructure at, Augusta Bay.

17. (S) Between 2012-2015, the US proposed:

-- Moving the 352nd SOF Group from RAF Mildenhall to Sigonella;
-- Permanently stationing fixed-wing SOF aircraft (i.e. MC-130s and CV-22s) at Sigonella; and
-- Stationing SOF high-speed naval vessels that are currently being tested in the Pacific.

18. (S) US estimates of personnel increases at Sigonella were the following:

-- Between 2008 and 2011, an additional 1,000)1,300 troops accompanied by approximately 700)1,400 dependents would relocate to Sigonella.
-- Between 2012 and 2015, another 1,100 troops with 2,100 dependents would relocate to Sigonella as part of the 352nd Special Operations Group moving from RAF Mildenhall.
-- Total increases at Sigonella through 2015 could double the base population from 5,500 to 11,500 personnel.

19. (S) In response to Italian questions, Pavel emphasized a rolling set of decisions and implementation timelines dependent on particular locations. As consultations progressed, we would adjust our proposals to address host nation concerns.

10. (S) On physical infrastructure, Roeger stated the US would seek to establish a Joint Maritime Operations Facility at Augusta Bay, with Sigonella being the preferred location for SOCEUR HQ, Army & Navy SOF, Joint Special Operations Air Command, a Joint Air Operations Facility, and a Joint Deployment Facility. Brauzzi expressed concern that our plans might interfere with a proposed NATO project to expand the runway at Sigonella. Pavel and Bue committed to deconflict our proposals with any NATO plans at the base. (COMMENT: Neither Embassy Rome nor USNATO can locate evidence of a current NATO runway expansion project for Sigonella. END COMMENT)

SOF ACTIVITIES FROM SIGONELLA AND ON SICILY

11. (S) SOCEUR rep Lt. Col. Alan Bridges briefed on the types of missions and training programs US SOF forces typically undertake, emphasizing his brief was a "wish list" we understood the GOI could not provide entirely. Brauzzi expressed concern over the impact of SOF training on local populations and infrastructure in Sicily. DoD advised that Sicily's existing ranges do not fulfill SOF requirements, and there may be a requirement for modifying existing rules, or creating new facilities. Brauzzi reminded the US that Italian forces are subject to flight ceilings for training purposes, and that our proposals for low-level flight training (50, -

100,) might be difficult to approve. He was particularly concerned with proposals for over-the-beach assault training with live-fire, and suggested Sardinia might be an alternative location for some proposed SOF training. Brauzzi questioned whether areas around Sigonella and Augusta Bay could accommodate an increase in personnel, and noted that the MFA and MOD would need to consult with local authorities on an increased US presence. He raised a number of questions on the geographic scope of SOF projection, how SOF fits in with NRF objectives, availability of SOF in Sigonella for non-combatant evacuation, political controls SOF operations will need, and whether the primary counterpart for the GOI would be EUCOM or SOCOM.

IMPORTANCE OF NATO & NEED FOR A CLEAR CHAIN OF COMMAND

12. (S) The US side welcomed Italian views on how to strengthen NATO transformation through GDPR, reminded the GOI that U/S Grossman kicked off US GDPR consultations in December 2003 at the NAC, and emphasized that NATO's transformation and our defense realignment were mutually reinforcing. Brauzzi acknowledged the possible NATO aspects of the US proposal as a "plus," but raised concerns over potentially confusing chains of command vis a vis US SOF forces in Italy, which might be deployed alternatively for EUCOM, CENTCOM, or global SOCOM missions. Brauzzi referenced his experience during OEF of not knowing whether EUCOM or CENTCOM was his appropriate interlocutor for a given mission. Italy now knows how to better manage that process, but the GOI needs a familiar and consistent interlocutor. The Italians assume EUCOM will always have say in whatever SOF operations might be launched from Italian territory.

13. (S) Pavel stressed DoD is working to eliminate rigid lines between commands and to reinforce relationships among commanders. EUCOM is working to tailor capabilities to deal

with challenges emanating from other theaters, and we are helping European allies to deal with security challenges in those regions. However, we acknowledge that we will not be able to eliminate all seams between SOCOM, EUCOM, and CENTCOM for Sigonella-based operations. To address Brauzzi's point about Italy's interest in Africa, Pavel noted we are seeking to develop a series of access points in sub-Saharan Africa to build mobility in an East-West fashion. The proposed network of CSLs in sub-Saharan Africa would provide greater access for C-130s to respond to humanitarian crises and other contingencies. With respect to non-combatant evacuations, the US side acknowledged that we are sensitive to host country needs wherever we have forces.

MORE DATA AND DISCUSSION WELCOME

14. (S) The Italians were pleased at the level of detail provided by the US side, which promised to return with details on chain of command, freedom of action, and the full range of requirements for Sigonella once those details have been worked out. Pavel and Bue promised to provide US positions on those key issues in writing in advance of the next meeting, to allow the Italians to prepare a detailed response. Brauzzi suggested the working group reconvene in Rome at the end of January, with a sub-working group of EUCOM and IT MOD technical experts meeting in the interim to work out some technical issues, the results of which would be briefed to the full working group in January. He also suggested the working group visit Sigonella during the next visit. Brauzzi described the discussions as fruitful and noted he is now in a better position to report to his authorities. When asked if our proposals were realistic, Brauzzi said the GOI needs to fully consider important local dimensions and the US proposal will require strong bipartisan support in Italy, given the historical high rate of turnover in Italian governments. He believed that there was sufficient bipartisan consensus to move forward with discussing US proposals, but that both sides would need to remain focused on the issue as talks continue.

15. (S) Comment: This first working group meeting on the SOF consolidation aspects of the GDPR was viewed as successful by both sides. The Italians appreciated the consultative spirit

of the US presentation and welcomed the level of detail on what the US is looking to do at Sigonella. As we move forward with this process, it will be imperative to maintain the spirit of partnership and to keep the Italians fully informed of our thinking. As long as our Italian interlocutors feel they are a partner in this process, that we are responsive to their concerns, and that basic agreements like the 1954 BIA remain the unchallenged basis for discussion, they will continue to try to meet our requests. They have already contacted Post to inquire about the US paper (including discussion of political and legal aspects of SOF consolidation) to set the stage for the next Working Group meeting, at which they expect freedom of action to be addressed. End comment.

16. (SBU) Participants:

Italy:
Claudio Bisogniero, Vice DG of Multilateral Political Affairs Bureau, MFA
Giovanni Brauzzi, Head of MFA NATO office
Pier Mario Dacco, MFA NATO office
Francesco Tafuri, MFA Americas Bureau
Felice Soldano, CESIS
Captain Giovanni Gumiero, Chief of IDGS International Relations Office
Major Vincenzo Iosca, IDGS
Brigadier General Marco Bertolini, Commander of Italian SOF, MoD

U.S.:
PM DAS Kara Bue
OSD Principal Director for Strategy Barry Pavel
Bill Roeger, OSD/PA&E
Anne Bonfante State/PM
Nathaniel Heller State/EUR
Anthony Aldwell, OSD/ISP/EPS
Lt Col Alan Bridges, SOCEUR
Maj Brian Bruckbauer, EUCOM
Chris Kinsley, Commander, NAVEUR/NAS Sigonella
Jonathan Cohan, Pol-Mil Counselor, U.S. Embassy Rome
Susanne Rose, Pol-Mil Officer, U.S. Embassy Rome
Col. Roy Panzarella, ODC Chief, U.S. Embassy Rome
Capt. Patricia Battin, USSSO, U.S. Embassy Rome

(U) This cable has been cleared with DAS Bue and Principle Director Pavel.

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